

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Three Rivers Communications ROW
Proposed Implementation Date:	2012
Proponent:	Three Rivers Communications
Location:	Augusta Exchange (see attached list)
County:	Lewis & Clark
Trust:	See attached list.

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Three Rivers Communications is applying for easement across State Land for a buried fiber optic cable. The proposed easements are part of a larger project to upgrade the proponent's Augusta exchange. The project would greatly enhance reliability and capability of the existing communication system in the predominantly rural area. The 16' easements would involve 36 separate State tracts and total ~34 acres, (see attached list). The easement would follow existing infrastructure routes, (roads, electrical utility, and existing historic comm. facilities).

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

Proponent/lessees were contacted and several public meetings held.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

None.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

1. Issuing the easements as proposed.
2. Not issuing the easements.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

None. No unusual features are present, existing roads would be utilized.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

None. No significant surface or groundwater impacts are expected. Project would bore under actively used irrigation ditches/canals.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

None. No air Quality impacts are expected. Some minor dust can be expected during construction.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

None. No rare plants or types were identified on the proposed area. The nature of the project and use of existing roads would limit disturbance and impact. All disturbed areas would be reseeded on completion of construction.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

None. The nature and limited duration of the project will limit impacts.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

None. No impacts are expected.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

The area of potential effect was inventoried to Class III levels by ACRCS in 2011. The project will have No Effect to state owned Heritage Properties.

Most of the tracts have no cultural sites, however the following cultural sites were recorded on state parcels, with the recommendations noted.

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|------------|------------------------|---|
| • 24LC0515 | Vaughn Ditch | project would bore under and therefore no effect (see pgs 51-52 of report on file at DNRC) 36, T20N, R7W |
| • 24LC0516 | tipi rings | proposed route should be moved to 100' west of site to avoid disturbance (see pages 52-53 of report) 1, T21N, R8W |
| • 24LC0517 | cairns | stay within 10' of ROW fence to avoid cairns # 22 & 23 (see pages 53-54) 34, T20N, R7W |
| • 24LC0518 | rectangular depression | non-significant, no recommendation to avoid (see pages 54-55) 5, T19N, R7W |
| • 24LC0631 | road to Florence | on 6 of the tracts, slight impact but no need to avoid (see pages 55-58) 24, T18N, R5W; 32, T19N, R5W; 11 & 24, T19N, R6W; and 27 & 34, T20N, R6W |
| • 24LC0981 | Bickle-Burke ditch | project would bore under and therefore no effect (see page 62) 10-12 & 15, T20N, R5W |

- 24LC1778 paleontological no evidence in corridor, no adverse effects (see pages 70-71)
1, T21N, R8W

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

None. The project is in a very rural area and not prominent. The easements are adjacent to public roads and would be visible during the construction phase only.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

None. No impacts are expected due to the nature of the project.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

None. Currently the tracts are leased for grazing, and surrounded by private land. The easements follow existing infrastructure corridors.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.• Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.• Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

None.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

None.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

None.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

None.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

None.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

None.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

None.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

None.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

None.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

None.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

Issuing the easements would provide an estimated income to the State of \$17,096.00 based on \$500/acre or \$100 minimum/easement. Communication reliability and capability, (telephone and data), would be greatly improved in this very rural area.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name:	Robert Vlahovich	Date:	12/19/11
	Title:	Special Uses Coord.		

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

I have selected the alternative to recommend approval of the requested easements by the Land Board.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

There will be minimal effects to the Trust lands from the installation of a buried fiber optic cable. The various trusts will receive compensation as outlined in the attached table and the public in the area will gain improved phone and data connections.

All stipulations in the cultural resource studies, applicable to the involved state lands must be followed.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:☐


EIS

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More Detailed EA

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No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: D.J. Bakken
	Title: Helena Unit Manager
Signature: 	Date: 3/5/2012

3 RIVERS COMMUNICATIONS					
Montana State Lands - Augusta Exchange					
TRACT	COUNTY	TRUST	ACRES	ESTIMATED VALUE	
Township 21 North, Range 7 West					
Section 22	Lewis & Clark	Cap. Bldg.	1.6636	\$832.00	
Section 27	Lewis & Clark	Cap. Bldg.	1.3228	\$661.00	
Section 16	Lewis & Clark	CS	0.8595	\$430.00	
Section 21	Lewis & Clark	Cap. Bldg.	1.1765	\$588.00	
Township 20 North, Range 5 West					
Section 23	Lewis & Clark	CS	0.9762	\$488.00	
Township 19 North, Range 6 West					
Section 11	Lewis & Clark	CS	0.052	\$100.00	minimum
Township 19 North, Range 7 West					
Section 3	Lewis & Clark	Western/Eastern	0.15	\$100.00	minimum
Township 18 North, Range 4 West					
Section 2	Lewis & Clark	CS	1.6179	\$809.00	
Section 10	Lewis & Clark	CS	0.7508	\$375.00	
Section 16	Lewis & Clark	CS	0.7912	\$396.00	
Township 21 North, Range 8 West					
Section 1	Lewis & Clark	CS	0.8611	\$431.00	
Township 21 North, Range 7 West					
Section 15	Lewis & Clark	Pine Hills Schools	1.337	\$668.00	
Section 35	Lewis & Clark	Pine Hills Schools	1.4862	\$743.00	
Township 20 North, Range 7 West					
Section 12	Lewis & Clark	MSU Merrill	0.6178	\$309.00	
Section 34	Lewis & Clark	Montana Tech	0.2264	\$113.00	
Section 36	Lewis & Clark	CS	2.6594	\$1,330.00	
Township 20 North, Range 6 West					
Section 7	Lewis & Clark	MSU Merrill	1.1489	\$574.00	
Section 16	Lewis & Clark	CS	0.5277	\$264.00	
Section 27	Lewis & Clark	CS	0.5638	\$282.00	
Section 34	Lewis & Clark	CS	0.5532	\$277.00	
Township 20 North, Range 5 West					
Section 10	Lewis & Clark	CS	0.5075	\$254.00	
Section 11	Lewis & Clark	CS	0.5146	\$257.00	
Section 15	Lewis & Clark	CS	0.194	\$100.00	minimum

Township 19 North, Range 8 West					
Section 4	Lewis & Clark	Capital Bldg.	0.5958	\$298.00	
Section 5	Lewis & Clark	Capital Bldg.	2.5018	\$1,251.00	
Section 12	Lewis & Clark	Capital Bldg.	0.383	\$191.00	
Section 16	Lewis & Clark	CS	0.3782	\$189.00	
Township 19 North, Range 7 West					
Section 2	Lewis & Clark	Western/Eastern	0.792	\$396.00	
Section 5	Lewis & Clark	Montana Tech	0.4714	\$236.00	
Section 16	Lewis & Clark	CS	0.5314	\$266.00	
Section 32	Lewis & Clark	CS	0.7362	\$368.00	
Township 19 North, Range 6 West					
Section 24	Lewis & Clark	Pine Hills	0.3472	\$174.00	
Township 19 North, Range 5 West					
Section 32	Lewis & Clark	CS	2.1409	\$1,070.00	
Township 19 North, Range 4 West					
Section 26	Lewis & Clark	CS	0.2374	\$119.00	
Section 36	Lewis & Clark	CS	2.6056	\$1,303.00	
Township 18 North, Range 5 West					
Section 24	Lewis & Clark	CS	1.7085	\$854.00	
TOTAL 36 TRACTS			33.9875	\$17,096.00	
SUB-TOTALS BY TRUST					
Capital Building				\$3,821.00	
CS				\$9,962.00	
Western/Eastern				\$496.00	
Pine Hills Schools				\$1,585.00	
MSU Morrill				\$883.00	
Montana Tech				\$349.00	